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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KHDP](#) [KPKO](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: UN OPTIMISTIC ABOUT DEMINING PROGRAMS

11. (SBU) Summary: The United Nations Mine Action Office (UNMAO) and its contractors expect a 90 per cent success rate in clearing mines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) in Sudan prior to a mid-2011 program handover to national authorities. Even with the current optimism, UNMAO doesn't realistically expect to completely depart in 2011, as they believe donors will demand further oversight. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Poloff met with officials from UNMAO, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the National Mine Action Center between Sept 13-16 to discuss current demining efforts and programs before the scheduled 2011 transition to national authorities. Nigel Forrestal, Acting Program Director for UNMAO, informed Poloff he expects a 90 per cent removal rate of all mines and UXOs from the 24 Sudanese states prior to June, 2011.

13. (SBU) Despite his optimism, Forrestal said UNMAO doesn't realistically expect to depart in 2011 as the organization's leadership anticipates donors will demand further oversight. UNMAO expects that 30 per cent of its staff will remain past 2011 and 2014 will be a more realistic program completion date. He said the additional time will allow UNMAO to complete accreditation of local authorities.

Local NGO development as the way forward

14. (SBU) Qadeem Tariq, the Senior Technical Advisor for the UNDP, anticipates the creation of new Sudanese demining NGOs in the next few years that will need on-going training. As more than 80 per cent of current demining workers are Sudanese middle management and below, he said staffing the new NGOs should be fairly simple, as these workers can be easily absorbed by the new NGOs and retrained. He envisions 15 training teams specializing in awareness, clearance or victims' assistance.

South Kordofan takes a holistic approach

15. (SBU) Marco Buono, the Program Manager for the Danish Church Aid (DCA) in Southern Kordofan, said that DCA is restructuring its programs. He will merge survey, Mine Risk Education (MRE), and Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) teams into eight to ten person multi-task teams which will complete the spectrum of operations from technical survey to mine removal and community education. Buono feels this shift to a more holistic approach will greatly enhance the efficiency and timeliness of DCA programs. The teams will be fully integrated and operational before March 2009. He hopes to receive additional funding for a permanent, national training facility to standardize procedures and build capacity.

Nuba Mountains sees development and tribal cooperation

16. (SBU) Maluk Ruya Abugrenat, Manager of the Nuba Mountains Mine Action Sudan (NMMAS) Program, reported an increase in security in the area, which has enticed local populations to return (an increase in security compared to pre-CPA). He noted a trend in low-level sustainable development and tribal cooperation as businesses work together to make up for lost time. He anticipates that with the returning population, more areas will be surveyed and more mines

will be found, especially along the Ethiopian border. (Comment: This prediction is also somewhat ominous, as returning populations are likely to discover mine fields by accident. End comment.) He also noted the addition of the "Bozena 4" remotely controlled mine clearance flail machine obtained in 2002 as a key to their continued operational success. Abugrenat's team reports clearing more than 77,936 square meters this year.

Northern Regional Operations hindered by politics

¶17. (SBU) Diek Engelbrecht, Coordinator for Northern Regional Operations for UNMAO, affirmed 19 high impact areas will be cleared by December and expects to start operations in Jonglei and Upper Nile in June. Kassala and Damazin will still have a combined, thirty-six highly- impacted communities to be addressed, but Engelbrecht believes that by 2011 all "highly-impacted" communities will be cleared. Kassala remains politically sensitive, as both local and national officials have a hand in the permit process for the Eritrean border. As a result, much of the border area remains un-surveyed despite the likely of WWII-era UXOs.

¶18. (SBU) Englebrecht lauds the MRE program, which has led to a decline in the number of civilian mine victims. He attributed this to the fact that starting in 2006 internally-displaced persons benefited from mine awareness education programs. He voiced concern, however, that the number of mine victims is much higher given poor communications infrastructure and a reluctance on the part of medical personnel to take the time to report casualties. This prevents some data from reaching the UNMAO.

Darfur: Robust MRE program, but operationally stalled

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¶19. (SBU) Nigel Forrestal (UNMAO) reported that operations in Darfur are stalled due to insecurity in the area. He said contractor JASMAR can currently only react to "pin-point operations" (UXO spot tasks). Reconnaissance operations are very difficult given the current loss of nine vehicles this year due to carjacking. Mine Tech International and MECHEM contractors will be handling road clearance starting from the south. This should begin in October. The MRE program is strong and is focused on educating IDPs on what to look for as they return home. However, economic necessity means some will still choose selling scrap metal (when vehicles are destroyed by mines) over the danger of handling UXOs.

Overall Challenges

¶110. (SBU) All contacts reported that bad weather will limit operations from July until October. In addition, roads, markers, and UXOs will shift following heavy rains, creating an additional hazard. The intense heat of Sudan and heavy protective gear prevent teams from working at full strength, and they must constantly rotate in 30-45 minute shifts. Christina Greene, UNMAO Program Officer said that surveys for Darfur and the Chadian borders have yet to be completed, which may mean more mine/UXO areas are still unregistered. Contacts reported that customs procedures continue to hold up equipment, and the ongoing delays for visas and travel permits will complicate on-going operations. In addition, theft of equipment in shipment status to Darfur remains a continuing problem.

Comment

¶111. (SBU) Despite UNMAO's optimism, political uncertainty alone (let alone the logistical challenges due to weather, poor roads, etc.) suggests that a completion of a 90 per cent level in currently-known mine/UXO areas may be unrealistic. Moreover, there is still a lack of survey data for Darfur and the Eritrean and Chadian borders. If one of UNMAO's goals is for Sudanese organizations to take over a functional de-mining program in 2011, UNMAO should consider giving greater emphasis to training and coordination programs. This will facilitate local NGOs beginning to take over UN demining projects in 2011.

